building. By the end of 1862 nearly 100 families had settled the eastern half of the Provo Valley. The new townsite was named Heber City after the popular Heber C. Kimball, who served as Brigham Young's first counselor in the LDS Church leadership. (Halverson 1991)

Smith's Grove & Mound City

It was not mere coincidence that brought together the first families that settled in the western edges of the Provo River valley in 1859. Most of these families (David Wood, Levi Empey, Hyrum Oaks, Jesse McCarrell, Benjamin Mark Smith and others) had known each other and traveled together since the Mormon exodus

Jeremiah & Ruth Robey.
Courtesy of David H. Epperson.

from Nauvoo, Illinois in 1846. Their long-time association and bonding was the result of the following experiences: David Wood was the captain of the pioneer company of Mormons traveling 1,200 miles overland from Kanesville, Iowa to Salt Lake City in June 1852. Among
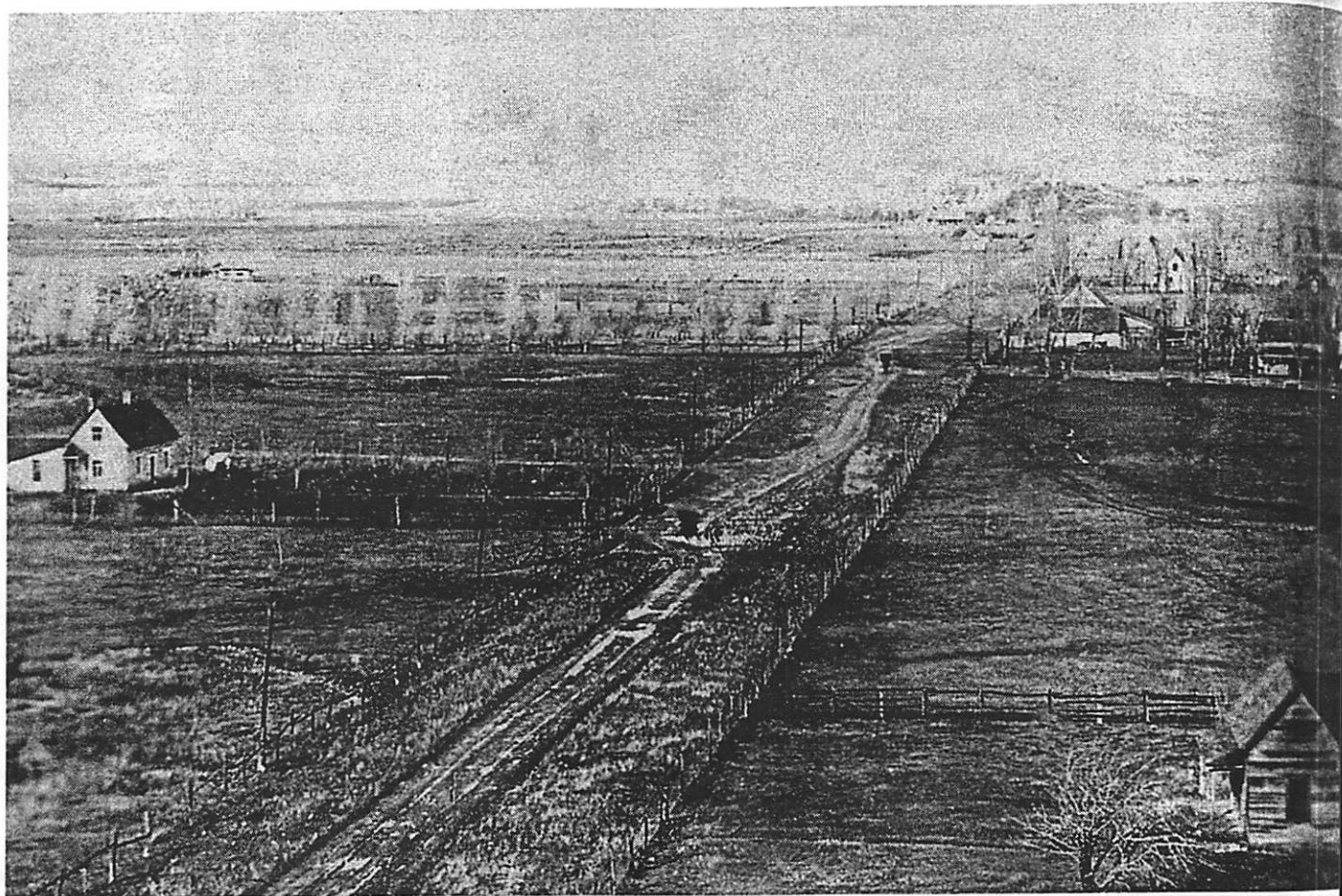
the group of 260 Latter-day Saints were Wood's sons-in-law, Empey, Oaks, Smith, and McCarrell, together with the families of Jeremiah Robey, Sidney H. Epperson, Henry Busenbark, John Van Wagoner, William Meeks. (Journal History 1852)

Upon arriving in the valley of the Great Salt Lake on October 1, 1852, Wood and his friends settled in American Fork, Utah County about thirty-five miles south of Salt Lake City. Together they built new homes and started a new life in the West. Five years later, LDS President Brigham Young received word that the U.S. Government had sent an army out to the Utah Territory to establish "law and order among the Mormons." As noted earlier, Young made plans for all families living from Salt Lake City northward to the Idaho border to abandon their homes and move south into Utah County. President Young also called for men to join the Utah Militia in

Jesse McCarrell's house at the foot of Jesse's Mound ca. 1900. Courtesy of Alvah Kohler.

a campaign to slow the federal troops. David Wood was joined by his sons-in-law and friends in successfully harassing the U.S. soldiers by stampeding their livestock, burning their supply wagons, and destroying all of the grazing feed for miles around.

David Wood, then fifty-nine, was "called" by the bishop of the LDS Ward in American Fork to lead a small group to colonize the high mountain valley known as the Upper Provo River east of Utah County. On February 25, 1858 during a church meeting the "mission to the White Mountains" was discussed by Bishop Harrington and Wood along with his extended family and friends were formally called to prepare to move within the year. So one more time this group of close family and friends left their newly established homes to begin a new settlement in a wilderness. These experiences of faith and trust formed a very special bonding between the Wood, Oaks, Smith, McCarrell, Epperson, Robey families and others who joined them in establishing a home in Midway. (Wood 1990)

In 1859, on April 18th Benjamin Mark Smith, Sidney H. Epperson, Jeremiah Robey, David Wood, and Jessie McCarrell drove into the Provo Valley and with their families settled by a beautiful cottonwood grove on the banks of Snake Creek.

This grove was named Smith's Grove in honor of Benjamin Smith. These were the very first settlers of Midway. Other settlers soon began moving in, and a group of families settled on both sides of Snake Creek about four miles up the creek, making the "Upper and Lower Settlements. The Upper Settlement was called Mound City.

On June 26, 1862, Sidney H. Epperson was appointed Presiding Elder of the Upper Settlement. John Fausett, and Samuel Thompson were appointed first and second counselors of the upper settlement consisting of 36 families. David Van Wagener was appointed to preside over the lower settlement in 1864 which consisted of 20 families.

Indian Troubles

As the Mormons colonized and implanted the Utah Territory with their own social and cultural traditions, they also clashed with the Native American population already there. In 1847 fewer than 20,000 Native Americans lived in Utah. Large segments of their population had been decimated by the diseases introduced by the white explorers, fur trappers, and settlers. Most of the conflicts raged between the Mormons and the Utes,